

Rep. Holvey and other members of the House Rules Committee:

I urge you to vote “No” on HB 2974. I say this as a Salem resident who followed closely the lengthy debate over the Salem River Crossing project, which was killed in February of this year by the Salem City Council on a 6-3 vote.

This project wasn’t popular with people in Salem, as evidenced by the fact that each of the six city councilors who voted to put to rest the Salem River Crossing campaigned on a “No Third Bridge” platform and were elected in recent years..

So it’s dismaying to see the Oregon legislature considering a bill that appears designed to overturn the City Council vote and bring back a proposal for another bridge across the Willamette River.

I realize that some might deny this is the purpose of HB 2974. Well, if this is the case, then amend HB 2974 to say that the Special Bridge District is prohibited from proposing a bridge within the city limits of Salem. That would help allay one of my concerns about this bill, but there are other problems with it.

Notably, four people elected to a Special Bridge District, plus an ODOT representative, would get to increase the taxes of everybody in Marion, Polk, Linn, and Yamhill counties -- *without* the people in those counties getting to vote on whether they wanted to pay for whatever new bridge those five people dreamed up. Or, whether they’d ever use the bridge.

Thus while I prefer that you not refer HB 2974 out of committee, because it is a bad idea, if you did decide to keep the bill alive a provision should be added to require that people in the four counties are able to vote on whether a proposed bridge put forward by the Special Bridge District should move forward.

The cost of the proposed bridge should be noted in the referral to voters, along with the amount of the property tax increase needed to pay for it. It just doesn’t make sense that, as noted above, five members of the governing body of the Special Bridge District should be able to levy a property tax increase without a vote of the people who would pay for the bridge.

Sincerely,

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